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ON THE TEACHING OF CICERO'S ORATIONS

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The writer was once called upon to visit a certain school in which Latin was taught by a young woman who had had the best of training and whose work now needed to be appraised. The sad plight of the Cicero class still lingers as an unpleasant memory. The work of the hour was opened by an exercise in "reading the Latin." This lasted about twenty minutes. The students gave undivided attention to quantities and accent, making no apparent effort to follow the meaning. Then followed a truly lamentable attempt to translate the assignment, supplemented by such thrilling questions as "Who were the consuls of the year 79 B.C.?"

After the class was dismissed, when asked whether as much time as this was usually given to "reading the Latin," the teacher replied proudly: "Oh, yes, we usually give more time. For Professor Blank, you know, taught us that a Latin passage is not really learned until it can be read intelligently(!) in the original." This illuminating answer makes unnecessary any further comment on that part of the work; but some remarks may be in order regarding the teaching of "history" in connection with Cicero's orations.

On the occasion mentioned above, when the weighty question about the consulship of 79 was put to an unresponsive class, the teacher glanced apprehensively at the visitor (who, by the way, was himself somewhat apprehensive that the question might come round to him), and then, beating a tattoo with her pencil, she eyed the pupils reproachfully and exclaimed "History, class! History!"

It seems almost incredible that a teacher who had had the benefit of a good course of training could be guilty of such suicidal folly as this; and yet the remedy is not to be found so easily as one might suppose. The maker of the textbook feels constrained to supply even unimportant details in the notes, in order that they

may be complete; and the young teacher may feel it necessary, as a matter of policy, to hold the students responsible for anything stated in the notes, fearing that these will be little read unless the class is examined upon them all.

We can hardly blame the author of the text for wishing to make his notes "complete"; nor is it his fault that the publisher, who has an eye to the bulk of the volume, requires that the notes be "brief." But, without stopping to settle the question of the duty of author and publisher, or even to debate whether it is wise or unwise to attempt to hold a class responsible for everything stated in the notes, we are quite safe in saying that the notes of the average edition of Cicero's orations either slight or omit altogether matters of live interest to the students. How is this supplementary material to be supplied? As matters now stand, if supplied at all, it must be supplied by the teacher. How is the teacher to acquire the information? Why, by private reading, of course.

Here is the crux of the whole matter. Teachers of Cicero, how many of you have read Cicero's speech for Murena? No, I am not going to ask for a show of hands—that might be embarrassing. Yet the case of Murena is interlocked at every point with matters pertaining to the conspiracy of Catiline. In the first place, on entering upon the duties of the consulship in the year 63, Cicero had caused a new law to be passed against the bribery of voters; the penalties already were heavy, but Cicero's law added the drastic provision that officials found guilty of securing their election through bribery should be banished.

This law was aimed at Catiline, who was preparing to run once more for the consulship. It was hoped that, even if he were elected, he could be disqualified and banished by legal process. The speech for Murena (24. 48 ff.) gives interesting glimpses of the turmoil preceding the election, and of the contumacious and threatening character of Catiline's behavior in sessions of the senate. It describes, too, the dramatic scene on election day—how Cicero, as the presiding officer, went down to the election wearing a corselet under his robe, and how, when he disclosed this fact (thus showing that his life was in danger), the voters rallied to the support of conservative candidates, thus dashing Catiline's hopes once more.

The men elected (D. Junius Silanus and L. Licinius Murena) were candidates whom Cicero himself was backing. Up to this time Catiline's future plans were a matter of uncertainty, and it was very agreeable to Cicero to have elected to the consulship of 62, men on whom he could rely. But now one of the other candidates who "also ran," sore over his defeat, invoked against Murena Cicero's own law, claiming that Murena's election had been secured by bribery.

Here indeed was the irony of fate; the law passed as a precaution against Catiline was now to be made a weapon of offense against Murena—the man on whom Cicero relied to carry "his policies" on into the following year. It was in the period of suspense and uncertainty that elapsed between the departure of Catiline from Rome and the appearance there of the ambassadors of the Allobroges that Cicero was called upon to defend Murena. The whole situation bristles with points of interest.

Every teacher of Cicero should read *Pro Sulla*; and parts of *Pro Caelio*, *Pro Milone*, and other speeches are of great interest in their bearing on the conspiracy of Catiline. And what shall we say of the treasure-trove of Cicero's uncensored letters? Any teacher who is unfamiliar with this wealth of material would do well to secure forthwith a copy of a good selection like Watson's and set to work upon it at once. We need not stop to speak of other Latin authors here, except for a single reference to Sallust.

On beholding a new speech in Sallust's *Catiline*, a bright boy once said "Oh, this is another of Sallust's 'tailor made' speeches, is it not?" The criticism implied in this question is, of course, in the main just. But, whatever the critics may say, the speeches which Sallust attributes to Caesar and Cato on the fateful nones of December deserve very careful study. That the main drift of Caesar's remarks is correctly represented by Sallust is attested by Cicero's discussion of the same in *In Cat.* iv. Moreover, the speeches attributed to Caesar and Cato represent two very different types of oratory. Caesar's argument is calm and judicial, and designed to put the brakes upon the senate's action; Cato's speech is a tide of fiery invective. From what we know otherwise of Caesar and Cato, and of their sentiments regarding the conspiracy,

there is a large inherent probability that Sallust has caught the spirit of the leading speeches in that celebrated debate. And in this connection it should not be forgotten that Sallust was an officer in Caesar's army and that he probably had had abundant opportunity to hear Caesar in public addresses.

It is perhaps too much to expect that third-year students, without help, will fully appreciate these compositions; the sarcasm of Cato, in particular, would be likely to go over their heads. But, presented and explained by the teacher, these speeches ought to be very interesting to any class.

As illustrating the kind of commentary and discussion that a well-read teacher might introduce to quicken interest in the study of Cicero, the following "samples" are appended. The examples are taken more or less at random, and no other claim is made for them other than that they suggest a method of procedure.

1. *In Cat.* i. 13. 32: "desinant . . . circumstare tribunal praetoris *urbani*": Who was the "city praetor"? He was chief of the judges in the civil courts. Where was his tribunal? In the open forum. Why was the disorderly element in the city massing and "hanging around" this tribunal? Doubtless to intimidate judge or jury or otherwise to interfere with the business of the court. This suggests some very interesting topics for discussion.

a) Did attempts to interfere with court procedure ever break over into overt acts of violence? Yes, and rather frequently too, it would seem. For example, in the year 66, P. Autronius Paetus was elected to the consulship for the following year. Like Murena (mentioned above) he was charged with having gained his election by bribery, and on this charge he was tried. Apparently he had little confidence in the strength of his defense; for he first tried to to break up court proceedings through the help of a band of hired ruffians, and finally he had recourse to "rushing tactics" and stone-throwing ("lapidatione atque concursu" [*P. Sulla* 5. 15]). Even these means did not prevent his condemnation, and he afterward appears as one of the leaders in Catiline's conspiracy.

b) Were there other circumstances that favored miscarriage of justice? Yes. A good illustration may be found in Catiline's own experience. After holding the office of praetor, he governed

the province of Africa for a year, and robbed the natives so atrociously that he was obliged to stand trial for extortion in the year 65. By wirepulling, his good friend Publius Clodius was appointed "prosecutor," and with this help and the lavish distribution of his ill-gotten gains among the jurors a verdict of "not guilty" was secured.

Some years later this same Publius Clodius was himself put on trial, charged with profaning the rites of the Bona Dea. The jurymen demanded a guard to protect them from lawless attack; and it was so notorious a fact that the majority were bribed that a wag inquired of one of them whether they had called for a guard to insure the safety of their pocketbooks! "Quid vos . . . praesidium a nobis postulabatis? an ne nummi vobis eriperentur timebatis? (*Ad Att.* i. 16. 5).

c) Do these abuses tend at all to justify the stand which Cicero took on the nones of December, when he threw the weight of his influence in favor of the immediate execution of the five conspirators who were in custody? At that date Catiline was at large with an army, and the backbone of the conspiracy was not yet broken. Under these circumstances, if the five prisoners had merely been held over for trial in the usual way, how large were the chances that a verdict could have been secured against them?

2. *In Cat.* iii. 4. 8: "Introduxi Volturcium sine Gallis," etc. This speech was revised for publication some two or three years after it was delivered; and in checking it up Cicero had at his disposal a document unique in those times, namely a sort of stenographic report of that day's proceedings in the senate. In *P. Sulla* 14. 41-42 Cicero tells how this report was made: "Itaque, introductis in senatum indicibus, constitui senatores, qui omnia indicum dicta, interrogata, responsa perscriberent. At quos viros! non solum summa virtute et fide . . . sed etiam quos sciebam memoria, scientia, *celeritate scribendi* facillime quae dicerentur persequi posse." After the meeting this report was copied at once by slaves and distributed freely.

The beginnings of stenography date back to this period, and it seems very likely that some use of signs is referred to in *celeritate scribendi*. At any rate the record included minute details.

The speech for Sulla was delivered some time in the year after Cicero's consulship, and Cicero is there found in the very unusual position of defending a man charged with being implicated in the conspiracy of Catiline. The prosecutor has scored a point by saying that "Sulla was named by the Allobroges" (13. 36). Cicero turns to the official record and says (just as though in a modern court), "Yes, he was named by them; but read the evidence (*lege indicium*) and see *how* his name came to be mentioned."

Then follows the testimony in the official report, which showed: (a) that Cassius told the Allobroges that Autronius was among the conspirators, (b) that the Allobroges then *inquired* whether Sulla too was in the conspiracy, and (c) that Cassius answered that he did not know for certain. This testimony raises a number of interesting questions which do not call for discussion here. The matter of special interest at this point is the minute detail of the official report.

3. *In Cat.* iii. 6. 14: "Atque ea lenitate senatus est usus, Quirites, ut ex tanta coniuratione . . . novem hominum perditissimorum peona re publica conservata, reliquorum mentis sanari posse arbitraretur." Of the nine men here referred to, five were then in custody; and two days later they were strangled by the executioners. One or two queries are suggested.

a) Did others than the five lose their lives? Apparently not, for in *P. Sulla* 11. 33 Cicero speaks of the state as having been saved by the execution of *five*. Some fell, of course, along with Catiline and Manlius in the battle near Pistoria. Meanwhile at Rome the courts were kept busy for some months handling the cases of persons charged with implication in the conspiracy. By the summary execution of the five the backbone of the conspiracy was broken, and the court procedure now went forward without a hitch. Some of the accused were condemned, others defaulted and went voluntarily into exile. One or two seem to have bought immunity by informing against others. In *P. Sulla* 2. 6-7 Cicero mentions casually the following as having been brought to trial: Vargunteius, Servius Sulla, Publius Sulla, Marcus Laeca, Gaius Cornelius, and Publius Antronius. At this time he was defending another Publius Sulla on the same charge.

b) Do we hear again of the exiled conspirators? Yes, and in a rather curious connection. Some years later it was Cicero's unhappy lot to be himself driven into exile on the charge of putting Roman citizens to death without formal trial. On his arrival in Greece he found the country thickly populated with men whom he had been instrumental in exiling! "Quo cum venissem, cognovi refertam esse Graeciam sceleratissimorum hominum ac nefariorum, quorum impium ferrum ignisque pestiferos meus ille consulatus e manibus extorserat" (*P. Plancio* 41. 98). He was informed, moreover, that they had planned to give him a fitting reception ("insidias mihi paratas ab exulibus coniuratis" [*ibid.* 41. 100]). The danger and discomfort of his situation is alluded to also in *Ad Atticum* iii. 2, iii. 7. 1, and iii. 8. 1.

4. *In Cat.* iv. 10. 21: "Sit Scipio ille clarus ornetur alter eximia laude Africanus," etc. Here are enumerated the immortals with whom Cicero would like a niche in the "hall of fame."

a) How is this list made up? Every man is a distinguished warrior. In this fact alone there is nothing specially noteworthy, for the Romans were a people that rated men of action as distinctly first.

b) Was Cicero deserving of a place in such a company? He certainly thought so himself, and never missed an opportunity to press his claim. In the third speech against Catiline, immediately after the vote of the senate which ordered a thanksgiving in his name, he was quick to point out that this was an honor previously the reward of warriors only, "Quod mihi primum post hanc urbem conditam *togato* contigit" (6. 15); and in the next sentence but one he does not hesitate to rate his thanksgiving above those previously accorded to warriors, "*Ceterae bene gesta, haec una conservata re publica constituta est.*"

c) In making up the list for the "hall of fame" was there any special point in giving Marius a place? To be sure, his services were very noteworthy. But the list is exceedingly short and select (the two Scipios, Aemilius Paulus, Marius and Pompey), and Marius was a radical republican, while Cicero's sympathies were rather with the senatorial party. Is it possible that, in putting

forward the name of Marius, Cicero was adroitly trying to bolster up his own claim? Well, in the first place, Marius and Cicero were fellow-townsmen, both hailing from Arpinum; and, speaking in the year 62 in reply to a taunt that he was from a country town and therefore not a real "Roman," Cicero brings out another point of connection between himself and Marius: "Fateor, et addo etiam: ex eo municipio, unde *iterum iam salus huic urbi imperioque missa est*" (*P. Sulla* 7. 23).

Turning back to *In Cat.* iv. 10. 21, it will be noted that Marius' claim to a place in the "hall of fame" is set forth as follows: "Qui bis Italiam obsidione et metu servitutis liberavit." The reference is, of course, to the defeat of the Cimbri and Teutones, which turned back the tide of barbarian invasion. Little Arpinum then sent forth a son to be the "savior of the state"; later it sends forth another (Cicero) to duplicate the feat by suppressing the conspiracy of Catiline!

Perhaps this comparison should not be pushed farther; yet it is quite possible that Cicero meant that the thought of his hearers should not stop even here. Perhaps, indeed, we may find at this point an explanation of the rather obscure earlier passage (6. 12) in which Cicero speaks as follows of the plans of the conspirators: "Qui id egerunt, ut gentem Allobrogum in vestigiis huius urbis atque in cinere deflagrati imperi conlocarent." In the year 390 Rome had been burned by northern barbarians. Nearly three hundred years later Marius saved it from a repetition of the disaster. Does Cicero mean to suggest that he in turn is saving it from the Allobroges in 63?

d) Did the Romans generally take kindly to these pretensions on the part of Cicero? His personal friends and political associates seconded his claims; but by others he was freely criticized and derided. Seneca, who appreciated Cicero's services to the state, and who lived long enough afterward to view the situation with impartial eyes, records this very just judgment regarding Cicero and the events of the year 63: "Consulatum . . . non sine causa, sed sine fine laudatum" (*De Brev. Vit.* 5. 1).

Not only did Cicero talk himself, but he urged others (e.g., Archias) to write of his exploits. Several of his own writings on this

subject are lost; for example, the history of his consulship, written in Greek and, on the same topic, a long Latin poem, of which a considerable fragment is quoted in *De Divinatione* i. 11. 17 ff. Like many other people, Cicero seems to have been most proud of the thing he did least well; and he added insult to injury by harping on his own merits through the medium of second-rate verse. Quintilian, a competent critic and a writer not unfriendly to Cicero, says plaintively: "In carminibus utinam pepercisset, quae non desierunt carpere maligni" (*Inst. Orat.* xi. 1. 24). He appends some samples:

O fortunatam natam me consule Romam.
Cedant arma togae, concedat laurea laudi.

As this paper is intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive, what has already been said has doubtless made the point at issue perfectly clear. Our teaching of Cicero is too cut and dried; it follows too closely the narrow lines of the textbook. We need a larger and a freer air; and teachers who would bring light and inspiration into their work could not do better than to begin at once to learn something of Cicero through a first-hand personal acquaintance with his writings in the large.